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HOW TO COMPUTE CALORIES

One Swiss in three suffers from an excess of nourishment. Two million Swiss people therefore bear the symptoms of over-eating and absorbing food which is either too rich in calories or fatty substances. These findings by a team of Swiss nutritionists have led a soup manufacturer in Lausanne to print a complete and optimal menu on its packets in the hope that this sound advice will improve the physical welfare of its customers. To lend his influence to this campaign, a professor from Geneva University, Dr. Demole, recently held a conference on the extent of the nutritional imbalance in the eating habits of his compatriots.

It is generally accepted that a male grown-up requires no more than 2,800 calories a day (unless he is a lumber-jack or an athlete) while women can be fit on 2,000 calories (unless they are pregnant). Children and old people require less. But the average calorific intake of the Swiss is 3,200 calories a day, which means that five thousand million unrequired calories are burnt up daily by the overworked metabolism of the Swiss population.

This nutritional excess is of course common to all western countries and is part and parcel of the consumer civilisation. It has led to a noted increase of heart diseases, high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, obesity and apparently diabetes. Experience has shown on the other hand that reduced nourishment is good for health provided it is balanced. Never have the Swiss been as healthy as during the worst nutritional period of the war, in the summer of 1945, when individual calory supplies had been reduced from 3,000 at the outbreak of war to 1,900. Health remained good because rationing was calculated so as to preserve the right balance between calories, proteins, vitamins etc.

The fact that a third of the Swiss people eat too much or badly is mainly ascertained by the various symptoms they show. They do not necessarily eat more than the other two thirds but their

constitution is unable to adapt to a generally excessive rate of calorific intake. A corpulent man may have trouble with 2,500 calories while a constitutionally thin man will feel hungry if he has less than 4,000.

When food supply is plentiful which means that individual financial conditions do not place any barrier on consumption, it is difficult to blame anyone for eating too much. Unless one is a nutritionist or the owner of a "cal-stop" calory computer, it is difficult to assess how many calories one has absorbed in during an ordinary day.

A person on a diet may take sacharine in his tea thus keeping 50 calories at bay but not realise, when ordering a meal in a restaurant, that a steak has 180 calories while an entrecote has 440.

Esculape, the medical correspondent of the "Tribune de Genève" gave a series of similar striking examples. He noted that most people ignore that a 100 grammes of chips (the kind of portion bought wrapped up at a fish-and-chip shop) amount to 420 calories whereas a plateful of spaghetti bolognese has 500, or hardly more. Trying to abide by a diet providing for an intake of 1,000 to 1,200 calories, many people make an effort at lunch but forget the calorific impact of breakfast. According to *Esculape*, a cup of milk cocoa, a slice of bread and butter and jam already amount to 440 calories.

The problem of a surfeit of good food therefore seems to be unavoidable under the circumstances we live in. The situation may of course change within the next generation if those who lead the world do not get together to face the universal food shortage which will inevitably fall upon us if the population growth is not checked. There will probably be less over-nourishment in a world that has agreed to a better distribution of its wealth and has disciplined itself to a "zero-growth".

PMB

Cows no longer roam above Verbier

An experiment consisting in allowing some forty cows and heifers to pasture on the slopes above Verbier has been suspended because of legal problems.

A group of nature lovers with the interests of Verbier at heart had formed a cooperative society. About a hundred hoteliers and local residents bought 600-franc shares and set the scheme going. Cows were let loose on the slopes which no peasants nowadays care to farm and were kept in an experimental stable. For two seasons, the sight of a herd of cows came back to Verbier to the delight of everyone. But the scheme had more than folkloric implications. It also allowed the grassy slopes to be "mowed" naturally. Since peasants do not cut hay they no longer need the fields above Verbier tended to have long grass. This not only spoilt the neatness of the area but enhanced the risks of avalanches and fires. Unfortunately the experiment had to be discontinued. The cows had to be sold and the heifers brought to the slaughter house because of the legal problems involved in allowing cattle to pasture on unenclosed private land. The organisers hope to get the scheme on its feet again once they get the necessary backing of new by-laws.

Première on the Matterhorn

An important première has been achieved on the Matterhorn. Two mountaineers, Edgar Oberson (Lausanne) and his Czech companion Thomas Gross climbed up the *Gogna-Cerutti* route on the North face of the Matterhorn for the first time in winter. It took six days and nights for the two men to overcome what is considered by mountaineers as the most difficult way up the 4503-m high Matterhorn. This route had defied several previous attempts. A team of six climbers including Oberson had given up last year after three unsuccessful attempts during which 6000-fr worth of mountaineering equipment were left on the rock wall. What is incredible is that Thomas Gross, a 23 year old Czech refugee living in Neuchatel, had never before made any really difficult climb.

THE HORSES OF ZERMATT ARE OVERWORKED

The President of the Valais Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has claimed that the horses who pull visitors along light carriages in Zermatt are overworked, particularly during the tourist season. There are about fifty horses used for this purpose in the Matterhorn resort. According to the President of the animal lovers' society, Mr. René Cappi, a former cantonal

veterinary, these horses do not get adequate time to rest and to feed during the high season. Their plight has led many tourists to complain to the authorities. Moreover, coming from the valley, these horses suffer from the altitude and require a certain period of acclimatization which is often denied to them. A year or so ago, half the horses of Zermatt were stable-bound with equine flu.